

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION IN TURKEY THROUGH OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the main cooperative educational programs from past to present; to illustrate the design, components, operational process and the learning environments of the Cooperative e-Certificate Program designed for lifelong learning and carried out through open and distance learning; to investigate relevant experiences and problems encountered during the execution of the program; and to provide possible solutions. A cooperation protocol has been signed between Anadolu University and Directorate General of Cooperatives which is connected to the Ministry of Trade, to design and to implement the Cooperative e-Certificate Program. The aim of this cooperation is to increase the education level of people, especially the youth, who directly or indirectly work in the cooperative sector and to raise awareness of cooperatives in the society. Within this context, the Cooperative e-Certificate Program was prepared in cooperation with Anadolu University and the Ministry of Trade in order to expand the cooperative enterprises, which are economically and socially important and a great power, and to help existing cooperatives to continue their activities in a more successful and efficient manner. The Cooperative e-Certificate Program is designed to reach and contribute to a wide target audience, such as lawyers, accountants, cooperative managers, employees, partners, public officials working in cooperatives, members of cooperative management, audit and liquidation board. The unique content and e-learning materials of the educational program consists of 13 units which includes several topics such as organizational structure of cooperatives, contract procedures, rights and obligations of partners, general assembly, board of management, duties and authorities of the supervisory board, accounting, reporting, audit, budgeting, analysis of financial statements, preparation of annual reports. For a while now, some efforts have been made to make it compulsory for those who want to take part in the managerial positions of cooperatives.

Keywords: Lifelong Learning, Open and Distance Education, e-Certificate Programs, Cooperative

Introduction

Cooperatives are based on cooperation, a business model that has been successfully implemented in many countries by going through various stages of development during the times and have developed new features according to the needs. Cooperative literally means cooperation, and it is defined as “an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise” (ica.coop).

Based on the definition, cooperatives are seen as unions in which a democratic environment with voluntary participation is ensured, and the social and cultural needs of participants are met. Again based on the definition, cooperatives are enterprises in fact. The most important features that distinguish this business from others are them being democratic and non-profit. In addition to these, they are significantly different from others for having unique principles and values. Those principles and values play an important role in their activities.

The functions of cooperatives core values are to set out the basic philosophy, general frame and goals of cooperatives; to lead and shape the relationship between the purposes and the tools qualitatively, to provide an identity and a characteristic to this system; to establish and coordinate behavioral goals and patterns for the cooperative and its partners; to affect the selection of the required tools and methods directly; to bring abstract measures and standards to the system; to moderate the general approach, actions, behaviors that are thought-through implicitly or explicitly (Turan, 2017; p. 9) The core values of cooperatives are defined as self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In addition to these, ethical values such as honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others can be considered as core values (ica.coop).

On the other hand, the International Co-operative Alliance adopted seven cooperative principles (ica.coop). These are voluntary and open membership, democratic member control, member economic participation, autonomy and independence, education, training and information, cooperation among cooperatives and concern for community. Cooperatives are associated and function with these core values and principles.

Historically, cooperatives that are widespread all around the world were first established in England in 1844 (Mülayim, 2013; p. 10). With the Industrial Revolution that started at the end of the 18th century, the deterioration of the living conditions of the working class led to the emergence of the idea of cooperatives. Cooperatives were seen as an important opportunity in improving the economic and social conditions, and solving problems. Similarly, ideas and implementations related to cooperatives were adopted in France and Germany to improve social and economic conditions, and to reach prosperity. England was the pioneer of the consumer type; France was the pioneer of producer type and Germany was the pioneer of the credit cooperative (Turan, 2017; p. 3). Later

on, cooperative enterprises established for different purposes and started to spread rapidly all over the world. In our country, cooperatives started with a fund called Country Chests initiated by Mithat Pasha during the Ottoman Empire, and spread under the leadership of Ataturk in the Republic.

Cooperatives are effective tools in reducing poverty because of having an advantage of being established wherever they are needed. Furthermore, many cooperatives make significant contributions to the social and economic systems of countries by providing access to education, health, insurance, credit and other services needed in social life. All around the world, cooperatives that serve approximately more than 1 billion people operate in many different forms and sectors. As of 2019, based on the statistics that are provided by the Directorate General of Cooperatives which run under The Ministry of Trade in Turkey, 79.486 cooperatives in 32 different types have been functioning and they are associated with 571 unions. The registered partners of cooperatives are 7.845.509 (ticaret.gov.tr). Motor Carrier Co-operatives, Tradesmen and Craftsmen Co-operatives, Carriers Co-operatives, Consumers' Co-operatives, Agricultural Sales Co-operatives, Supply and Delivery Co-operatives, Production of Renewable Energy Co-operatives, Childcare Services Co-operatives are among those cooperatives that carry out their activities in Turkey.

Especially in developed countries, cooperatives contribute to the economy significantly. Based on the data provided by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), 2032 cooperatives from across 56 countries had a turnover over USD \$2.164 billion (ica.coop).

Cooperative managers and partners should adopt the principles of cooperatives and carry out their activities accordingly to keep the cooperatives alive, which are a business model based on win-win logic of partners and are significantly important for the business life. This can be achieved only by offering educational programs which can be accessed from anywhere anytime and by anyone. Another way is to adopt and disseminate the cooperative culture throughout the society. Lack of education, awareness and research activities were stressed as existing issues in Turkey by Turkish Cooperative Strategy and Action Plan (ticaret.gov.tr). Based on this need, an awareness in the society should be raised with the help of cooperative education that is designed to improve, adopt and sustain cooperatives in Turkey. In this study, the design, preparation process, structure, learning environments, support services, examination and the certification processes of Cooperative, which is conducted through open and distance education, is investigated by reviewing the cooperatives educations both in Turkey and all around the world. In addition to this, the experiences, problems and their solutions during the execution of the program are mentioned and suggestions for the future were presented.

Methodology

The aim of this study is to investigate current problems within the scope of a lifelong learning program conducted through open and distance learning, and to present some solutions. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

- Which studies have been conducted in the field of cooperative education around the world and Turkey?
- What are the components and learning environments of the Cooperative e-Certificate Program that is designed for lifelong learning and conducted through open and distance learning? How does the program run?
- What kind of problems are encountered during the design and execution of the program, and what type of solutions are being produced to these problems?
- What should be done to improve the implementation of the program?

The research dimension of the study is designed as a literature review in which theoretical and empirical discussions are addressed (Baumeister & Leary, 1997). To achieve that, paper review, observation and data that are obtained from individual experiences are given. With the findings and the results obtained, suggestions for the future are presented.

Cooperative Education Around The World And Turkey

The cooperative movement is based on the cooperation of people who come together on the basis of volunteering and mutual solidarity to find solutions to their common financial problems. There are three features that reflect the nature and characteristics of this movement (Yıldırım, 2006, p. 42): 1) Self-protection, 2) Self-management, 3) Self-production. These main three structural features were also the determinants of the aims of the cooperative. For cooperatives to carry out their activities, to protect themselves and to create sustainability, cooperatives services should be managed and carried out successfully. This will only be possible with an education that is customized according to the need and has sustainability.

The cooperative education has emerged with the birth of the cooperative movement, and in time it has brought different implementations according to the needs, expectations and educational understanding of the countries. The general approach in cooperative education is to design an education program to appeal to the whole society, mainly the cooperative partners, elected and assigned managers and officers. The general scope is to introduce

cooperative effectively, to make sure an effective cooperative and its general culture is adopted. The cooperative education in literature is defined as a work of making a deliberate change and providing cooperative information to the society, especially to the cooperative partners, by using certain methods and techniques to fulfil their functional duties (Koç, 2001, p. 35).

The scientific cooperative founded by Robert Owen in 1844 is considered as the first educational movement in the field of cooperative (Koç, 1986, p. 7). This educational movement was carried out by workers in a partnership with its founder, Owen. After this first initiative, in which the foundations of cooperative education were laid, education in the field of cooperatives took notice in many countries around the world. It is believed that the cooperative education will be effective in ensuring that the cooperatives are managed effectively, in raising awareness within the society and the partners about cooperative, and in removing misperceptions about the cooperative within the society (Çıkın & Karacan, 1996, p. 121).

The cooperative education is given especially at university level in developed countries. Even though the duration and form of the education varies from country to country, generally the history of cooperatives, principles of cooperatives, the social aspects of the cooperative movement, the events and organizational structure, philosophy of cooperatives and legal proceedings are covered. Cooperative is taught either as an elective or compulsory course at universities in almost all European countries, Canada and United States of America, Sweden, Brazil and Argentina (Çıkın & Karacan, 1996, p. 129).

The main cooperative schools around the world are as follows (Çıkın & Karacan, 1996, p. 129):

- The Co-operative College in United Kingdom,
- College Co-op and International Co-op College, Coop de France - Rhône Alpes, International Cooperative University in France,
- Raiffeisen Cooperatives School, Württembergische Genossenschafts - Akademie, Central Federation of German Consumer Cooperatives Academy, Karlsruhe Cooperatives Academy, DWA-Landesverband Hessen/Rheinland-Pfalz/Saarland, Hannover Cooperatives Academy,
- The Université de Sherbrooke, Canada Co-op College,
- Raynfanzen Academy and Consumer Cooperatives School in Austria,
- Prag Cooperatives College in Czech Republic,
- Cooperatives School in Spain Zaragoza,
- Swedish Cooperatives College in Sweden,
- The Cooperative College in Iceland,
- The Inter-College Co-op in Japan,
- Cooperative School in Israel,
- Centrosoyuz Cooperative High School in Russia,
- University of Helsinki Co-Op Network Studies.

In addition to these academies and schools that entirely specialized in cooperatives, there are also educational institutions focusing on cooperatives (Çıkın & Karacan, 1996, p. 129):

- ICA (International Cooperative Alliance) in London,
- ILO (International Labour Organisation) in Geneva,
- IFAP (International Federation of Agricultural Producers) in Washington and Paris,
- International Council for Research in the Sociology of Cooperation in New York,
- ICWE (International Cooperative Women's Guild) in London,
- ICWE (International Cooperative Women's Guild) in London,
- IRU (International Raiffeisen Union) in Frankfurt,
- Deutsche Stiftung für Entwicklungsländer in Belgium,
- IFYC (International Federation Of Young Cooperators) in Hamburg, CICA (Confédération International du Crédit Agricole) in Zurich

Based on all these, it can be said that in developed countries, institutions focus on cooperatives education, while in less developed countries these educations are carried out by the state. In the above-mentioned institutions, education is generally carried out through institutional field trips, meetings, events and internships. For example, the Cooperatives Association in North America organizes various educational programs for the development of in-store managers (Findikoğlu, 1970, p. 11). Local institution managers are also being invited to the educational programs to share experiences and ideas. Similarly, cooperatives education in Germany is run by the unions that cooperatives are affiliated with. The purpose behind this is to prepare an educational program that is not independent from each other, is holistic, continuous and practical.

To summarize, when we look at the developed countries around the world, associations and foundations, which are voluntary organizations, it is seen that they play a predominant role in the field of cooperatives education. In

these countries, the state does not interfere with cooperatives activities, but supports education, credit and the enforcement of protective laws for cooperatives. Educational activities are carried out by regional and national cooperative unions, which are the supreme organizations of cooperatives. Educational activities are carried out by the state in both developing and underdeveloped countries.

In our country, the roots of cooperatives education goes back to Ahmet Cevat, one of the lecturers of the Istanbul Teacher Training School (Gülpak, 1997, p. 61). However, his training did not achieve its goals. With the establishment of the Republic, great importance was paid to cooperative activities and education in this field. First cooperative education was held in the field of agriculture. Between 1930 and 1934, Istanbul School of Economics and Commerce pioneered scientific studies in this field by organizing conferences on the cooperatives movement and training. After that, cooperative was taught as a course in Higher Schools of Trade opened in Ankara, Izmir and Eskisehir. Cooperative education started as an independent discipline in the Cooperatives Institutes established within the Higher Teacher Education Schools in universities, and cooperatives, experts and educators were educated on master's degree level. The courses taught in this context as follows: General Cooperative, History of Cooperatives, Consumer Cooperatives, Agricultural Cooperatives, Research Methodologies in Cooperative, Marketing in Cooperative, Accounting in Cooperatives, Small Business and Artisan Cooperatives, Agricultural Cooperative Movements in The World, Cooperatives Business Management, Cooperatives Finance and Credit Cooperatives.

Co-op schools were established in 1938 in order to include cooperatives in primary and secondary schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education and to gain this culture. A cooperative was established within each school, and in 1948, the subject of cooperative was included in the curriculum in primary schools and village institutes (Kurtaslan, 2004, p. 3).

Educational activities of cooperative organizations also continued simultaneously. Ziraat Bank Cooperatives Directorate organized training on cooperatives for the managers and officers of the Agricultural Credit Cooperatives in Ankara and the provincial organization between 1942-1970. These face to face educations have been transferred to the education center of Ankara Agricultural Credit Cooperatives Central Union since 1970. Various publications such as newspapers and magazines were prepared by the association in the field of cooperatives, and the educational activities were carried out with these publications (Arman, 2004, p. 24).

With the Cooperatives General Law in 1969, the cooperatives were authorized to carry out educational activities by themselves or with the support of higher organizations. This law introduced The 1% Education and Promotion Fund and it was ensured that cooperatives were deposited in the account of the Ministries they are affiliated with and the relevant Ministry carries out these activities (Koç, 2001, p. 49).

In the 1970s, National Cooperative Education and Research Institute was established in order to gather all the educations offered by different institutions with different contents and features under one roof, to have all at one place and to provide more effective education by gathering the authority in one place. This institute was large enough to provide boarding education for 200 people, and it was designed and structured in a way that has facilities such as administrative buildings, classrooms, a library, a meeting and cinema hall, printing, painting, film washing and sound box. Between 1976-1984, it provided education to 7000 people. However, later on this institute was closed and transferred to the General Directorate of Rural Services (Arman, 2004, p. 30).

In 2000, the KOOPEP - 2000 Project, a training project for the trainers who would provide training in the field of cooperatives, was implemented by the Ministry of National Education. For the project, a series of training in the field of cooperatives were prepared and a training group of teachers and trainers in Ankara, Sanliurfa, Sinop, Istanbul, Erzurum and Izmir were gathered. Cooperatives and Business Knowledge and Cooperatives Knowledge courses were offered in formal and informal frame both as selective and compulsory courses in vocational-technical educational institutions under the Ministry of National Education. And again for the project, cooperative courses for adults have been offered in 920 public education centers across the country since 2000. However, KOOPEP - 2000 was not sustainable because of the political and bureaucratic reasons (Koç, 2012, p. 27).

Another important initiative worth mentioning in the field of cooperative education in our country is the establishment of Gazi University Cooperatives Research and Application Center in 2006. One of the main reasons of establishing Gazi University Cooperatives Research and Application Center (KOOP - MER), which started functioning with the regulation published in the Official Gazette on July 9, 2006, was to find solutions to the educational problems of cooperatives (Koç, 2014, p. 43). Numerous scientific papers were published and events were organized within the center, contributing to the development of awareness of cooperatives in the society.

Konya Food and Agriculture University was founded by Konya Seker, a subsidiary of Turkish farmers' beet producer cooperatives. Cooperatives and Agricultural Cooperation Application and Research Center started to function within the university on 9th April, 2020, which was established with the support of this cooperative-based structure. It had many establishment purposes including: to organize educational seminars, conferences, workshops, symposiums, congresses and similar events to contribute to the dissemination and development of cooperatives throughout the country, especially in the field of agriculture and food; to cooperate with other organizations working in this field; to provide training to farmers and food producers in the fields of agricultural cooperation, entrepreneurship and cooperative; to support individuals gather under one roof and cooperatives

activities; to promote; to provide information and training activities for the managers, staff and partners of the cooperatives in our country; to open courses and to offer consulting service (Resmigazete, 2020).

As a result of the studies conducted in the literature, it has been determined that many initiatives have been put into practice in our country for the adoption and dissemination of the cooperative movement and the formation of a cooperative culture in the society. On the other hand, it is seen that these practices were limited to central and provincial organizations, short-term and not sustainable at local level.

In fact, in order for the cooperative activities to be carried out in an efficient way, the active participation of the managers and partners in these activities matter a lot, and especially for the young people to recognize and adopt the cooperative movement, these training should be carried out continuously and be accessible to anyone anytime. This will only be possible with continuous cooperative education through open and distance learning. Based on this, the Cooperative e-Certificate Program was prepared within Anadolu University with the special request and cooperation of the Ministry of Trade.

Cooperative Education Through Open And Distance Learning: Anadolu University Cooperative E-Certificate Program

Open and distance learning with its features and opportunities is one of the most important approaches affirming learning as a process throughout the life of an individual. Open and distance learning applications completely or partially eliminate obstacles in education such as quota limitations in traditional higher education institutions, education level and age limit. All open and distance learning implementations, starting from extension courses to computer mediated systems, aim to provide lifelong learning opportunities to individuals with the help of their features formed by the principle of clarity (Kip Kayabaş, 2020, p. 33). Cooperative education offered through open and distance learning brings with many opportunities in terms of flexibility and accessibility compared to the courses conducted face to face by different institutions in the past, in terms of reaching people from all classes, ages and professions.

Since 1982, Anadolu University has been providing associate and undergraduate degrees with the help of Open Education by using distance education technologies and in 2007, it started to offer e-Certificate Programs through open and distance learning (esertifika.anadolu.edu.tr). Anadolu University e-Certificate Programs are three months long certificate programs, each consisting of one, two or three courses, in which the learning process is conducted online and exams are conducted under supervision. Anadolu University e-Certificate Programs, which launched for the first time in Spring 2007, aim to provide continuous education and up-to-date academic content for three terms a year (Mutlu et al., 2014, p. 30). Besides helping individuals who aim for personal development and a better career, e-Certificate Programs offer solutions to the in-service training needs for businesses that want to work with more qualified personnel.

As of 2020, Anadolu University e-Certificate Programs have 121 programs with 14 categories. The programs are accessible each year three times: during spring, summer and fall. From 2007 to 2020, a total of 209,234 people have enrolled in e-Certificate Programs and 86,239 of them have been successfully certified. e-Certificate Programs which are designed according to the distance education methods, are carried out online via the Anadolu eKampus System. By that, everyone is offered the opportunity to learn and develop individually, at any time, in any environment. e-Certificate Programs are carried out in all 81 provinces of Turkey, Cyprus and Azerbaijan in exam centers under supervision.

Efforts have been made to create collaboration with e-Certificate Programs and many public and private sector organizations that want to benefit from the knowledge, organizational capacity and experience spread across the country. One of them is the cooperation protocol regarding the implementation and development of the Cooperative e-Certificate Program signed between Anadolu University and the Ministry of Trade on May 21, 2015. The purpose of this collaboration is to increase the education level of those who directly or indirectly serve the cooperative sector, especially the youth, and to raise awareness of cooperatives in the society.

With the Cooperative e-Certificate program prepared in cooperation with Anadolu University and the Ministry of Trade, it is aimed to extend cooperatives which are an important and great power in economic and social terms, to help existing ones to sustain their activities in a more efficient and active way, to provide education related to cooperatives and to certify this education.

According to protocol, Anadolu University is responsible for

- producing the content for the e-certificate program,
- preparing and offering the e-learning materials,
- determining the academic calendar and quota of the prepared e-certificate program,
- conducting the education, preparing exams, following the success of the participants after the exam, informing the Ministry with a report at the end of the year regarding the organized training activities,
- encouraging its students and graduates to participate in activities such as cooperative activities, programs, trainings and seminars in the field of cooperatives, and providing updates and relevant information.

Meanwhile, Ministry of Trade is responsible for

- supporting the preparation and production of educational content in cooperation with Anadolu University,
- providing the necessary announcement and updates regarding the participation in the activities, programs, trainings and seminars cooperated in the field of cooperatives within the framework of the protocol,
- contacting other institutions and organizations to cooperate with, and supporting them for the effective execution of their activities.

For the project, a study group consisting of officials from both institutions was formed and the Cooperative e-Certificate Program was designed under the coordination of Anadolu University in cooperation with the relevant topics. In the preparation of the program, a team of Open Education Faculty managerial members, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences faculty members, Faculty of Law lecturers, instructional designers, graphic designers, e-learning experts, exam experts and technical experts from the information technologies center were gathered together by Anadolu University. Another team was established by the Ministry of Trade, consisting of managers and experts of the General Directorate of Cooperatives, officials from the higher units of cooperatives and non-governmental organizations operating under the Ministry. The Cooperative e-Certificate Program was designed under the coordination of Anadolu University by the study group combined with these two teams.

The Cooperative e-Certificate Program is aimed to contribute to a wide target audience such as lawyers, accountants, cooperative directors, employees, partners, public officers working on topics related to cooperatives, members of cooperative management, audit and liquidation board. Additionally, everyone over the age of 18 who has interest in this field has been given the opportunity to participate in the program and access education. With the help of this opportunity Anadolu University Cooperative e-Certificate Program clearly distinguished itself from any other prepared cooperative education so far. As can be seen in the case studies examined in the literature, the educational programs targeted a specific occupational group, a specific age group and even a specific educational level. However, Anadolu University Cooperative e-Certificate Program was designed as a result of the delicate work of expert instructional designers and content production teams in a way that would appeal to people of all ages, professions, and all educational levels. Considering this, it can be claimed that this is the first educational application that appeals to such a broad audience in Turkey.

Learning Environments

The learning environment of the programs are

- the Cooperative textbook designed according to distance learning techniques,
- e-learning materials offered through the E-Campus Portal.

Participants who enroll in the Cooperative e-Certificate Program prepare for the certification exam by using the printed textbook designed according to the distance learning methods, watching the lessons conducted online and using e-learning materials designed according to the self-study methods, sent to them by mail for 12 weeks.

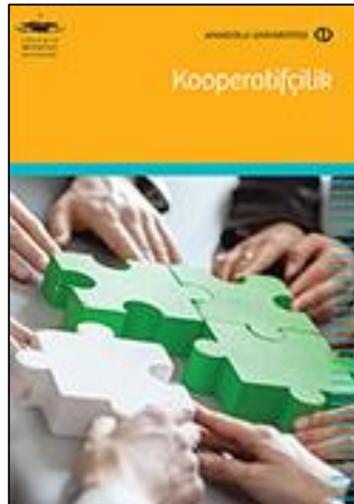


Figure 1. Cooperative Textbook

Among the cooperatives functioning in our country are Motor Carriers Cooperative, Tradesmen and Craftsmen Cooperatives, Women Entrepreneur Production and Operation Cooperative, Pharmacists Cooperative, which include partners and managers with a wide range of education levels from primary school to doctorate. The Cooperative textbook has been prepared to appeal to all members of the cooperatives, with the meticulous works of expert lecturers and instructors. A comprehensive, easy to read with a simple narrative content and a very detailed design in terms of teaching techniques has been made. The content of the textbook consisting of 13 units are as follows:

1. Introduction to Cooperative
2. Establishment and Articles of Association of Cooperatives
3. Partnership and Termination of Partnership
4. Rights and Obligations of Partners; Cooperative General Assembly
5. Cooperative Board of Directors
6. Cooperative Supervisory Board
7. Disintegration and Liquidation of Cooperatives
8. Supreme Organization of Cooperatives
9. Duties and Authorisations of Ministries
10. Document Order, Commercial Books, Declaration and Taxation in Cooperatives
11. Accounting, Reporting and Auditing in Cooperatives
12. Budgeting in Cooperatives; Analysis of Financial Statements and Annual Report

In the textbook, which includes economic, legal and financial aspects of cooperatives, each unit starts with a case study that is carefully selected from the field within its scope. Students are expected to examine this case study and then answer the questions. The answers to the questions are discussed on the e-learning platform e-Campus Portal under the mentorship of the instructor. Case studies are generally prepared to cover the most common issues and solution suggestions within the cooperatives.

In order to emphasize the important points, some of the brief information is enriched with visual elements and presented in a way to spark attention and provide clues. Additionally, in the section of Through Life at the end of each unit, case studies that the members of the cooperatives may need to create a link between real life practices and the topics covered within units. Another learning environment of the program is Anadolu University e-Learning Platform <https://ekampus.anadolu.edu.tr> (Figure 2). The Study Platform is accessed through the e-Government Gateway. When students login to the e-Campus portal, they can access every e-learning material of the Cooperative course.

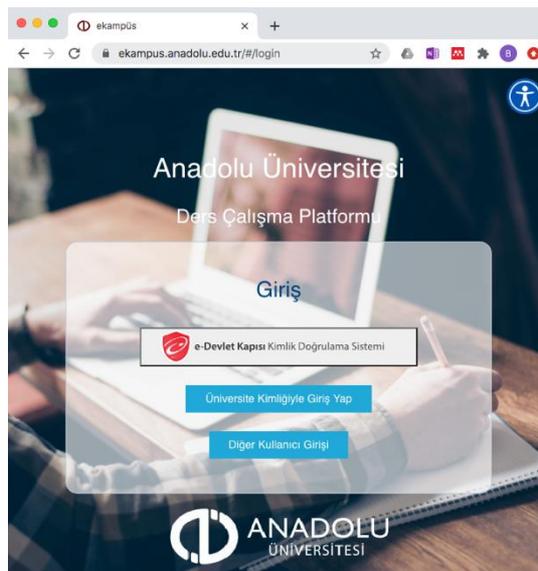


Figure 2. Anadolu University e-Learning Platform

The e-learning materials of the program are as follows: Textbook, Unit Abstracts, Lecture Videos, Let's Learn with Questions and Exercises. The e-Campus study portal offers both an electronic version of the Cooperative textbook in EPUB and PDF formats, and hardcopy which is sent to the students by mail. Thus, students can access the learning resource from anywhere without the need to carry the printed book with them. In the Unit Summary section, a 4-5 page summary of each unit in the textbook is offered in PDF format. After reading the textbook thoroughly, it is recommended to review the important points from the summary section to repeat them. Another e-learning material the Lecture Videos section houses audio-visual elements and therefore it is one of the most preferred learning materials by students. These videos are prepared by the lecturer of the course in professional studios. Video presentations are video lectures that are prepared in a way to summarize the structure of the units, explaining the important points that are difficult to understand and include tips and tricks, instead of presenting the information exactly as in the textbook. In the Let's Learn with Questions section, there are questions and answers prepared according to units. The Exercises section consists of multiple choice tests. The students can either answer these questions in the form of a pilot test or view as PDF with all of the questions and answers, and save them. The Let's Learn with Questions and Exercises sections are recommended as materials to be used for the preparation of the exams.

Support Services

Support services are provided by phone and e-mail to students enrolled in the Cooperative e-Certificate Program. Students can send an e-mail to esertifika@anadolu.edu.tr about any topics that they need to consult. Those e-mails are answered as soon as possible. Students are informed via e-mail and SMS throughout the process from the beginning of the courses until the announcements of the exam results. They receive reminder e-mails from time to time in order to keep them motivated and active. In addition to e-mails, students can get support by calling the call center number 0850 200 46 10 on weekdays between 09:00 and 18:00.

Exam and Certification

The last step of the Cooperative e-Certificate Program is the exam and it is carried out three times in 81 provinces with online supervision. During the enrollment to the program, the students are asked to choose the exam center and determine in which province they would like to take the exam. The examination organization is done by Anadolu University and is conducted either in computer labs of agreed universities all around Turkey under the supervision of someone in charge or online. Students are expected to get 50 points out of 100 points to be regarded as successful. Those with a score of 50 and above are entitled to receive a "Cooperative Certificate". 5 days after the exam, the "Exam Result" demonstrating the success of the candidates is published online and the printed certificates are sent to the students by mail (Figure 4). Exam results are also reported to the General Directorate of Cooperatives, the Ministry of Trade.



Figure 4. Certificate of Cooperative

Problems And Solutions

In this section, the problems encountered during the organization of the Cooperative e-Certificate Program and the possible solutions are discussed. Starting from the application and enrollment to the Cooperative e-Certificate Program, almost all of the steps related to the course is carried out by using computers and internet technologies, carrying out the course online on the platform, including receiving the exam entrance document, the certification exam, learning the result of the exam, a huge part of support services. Although it is not stated as a prerequisite at the registration stage, students enrolled in the program must have sufficient digital literacy skills in order to benefit from the services provided at the maximum level. Studies show that as individuals' competence to use computer and internet technologies increase, their anxiety level decreases and they use these environments more active (Akkoyunlu and Kurbanoglu, 2003, p. 9; Aşkar and Umay, 2001, p. 7; Chou, 2003, p. 743; Doyle, Stamouli and Huggard, 2005, p. 7; Gordon et al., 2003, p. 292; Seferoğlu, 2005, p. 100). As a supporting study, Gunawardena

(1991, p. 4) stated that students who do not have sufficient computer skills spend too much time interacting with the interface, and since they put all their attention and performance on figuring out the interface, they cannot concentrate well enough to generate ideas and engage in activities in the online learning environment. Thus, these students access less resources and tend to leave the environment because of boredom. Therefore, it is stressed that digital literacy skills are critical in open and distance learning. In order to minimize the possible problems in the context of digital literacy skills, e-Certificate Programs website has a user-friendly and easy to use interface with all its explanations and guidelines. It is made sure that the students have text descriptions for anything requiring technical skills, animations and sample videos as guidance. Live support service is provided to students who have difficulties in performing the procedures despite all the support materials. With the support services offered through different channels, an intensive support service is carried out to ensure students accessibility.

One of the top issues that the students face is accessing their personal e-mail account at the stage of completing the application process. In order to apply to the system, the students must first register to the system with a valid e-mail, and then with the password sent to this e-mail address and their national id code they must submit their application. Sometimes students cannot proceed because they cannot remember their password for their personal e-mail accounts. There are even candidates who do not have e-mail address until they apply. In such cases, the coordinator staff supports the candidates by phone to create a valid e-mail account. Then, information is given about the application process. Also, candidates must make a transaction with a credit card in order to pay the registration fee for the program. Candidates who cannot make transactions with or do not have a credit card can apply to the coordinators and request another payment option. In such cases, the candidates are informed by the coordinator staff and the necessary guidance is provided.

As it is known, the enrollment process to e-Certificate Programs is open three times in a year during spring, summer and fall. Application dates, education semester, exams period are announced on the Academic Calendar page at the beginning of each year. Applications are open for three weeks at the beginning of each term. When candidates miss these dates for any reason, they have to wait for the next semester's application dates. At this point, students who have problems request the application system to be reactivated. However, due to the fact that the exams are held in the centers under supervision and the education period cannot be extended, therefore applications can only be made within the specific dates in the academic calendar, not at any requested time. A solution to this problem has not been found yet.

There are some problems related to learning material choices during the teaching process. Some students study by using only the textbook, and they use the learning platform in a very limited way, since they do not choose other course materials or sufficiently examine. But, they can prepare themselves for the certification exam more effectively with e-learning opportunities prepared with rich materials. In order to solve this problem, samples of e-learning materials that may attract their attention are sent by e-mail at regular intervals during the education period. By doing so, they are informed about the materials that may attract their attention, preferences according to their characteristics, and other options that support their learning process.

Another problem is the issue of cargo shipments. Textbooks and certifications are sent by post to their addresses, and no additional fees are charged from students for these posts. Sometimes, mails return because people misrepresent their addresses or they cannot be found at their addresses. Students are requested to update their addresses to get the post without paying any extra charge. However, if the post returns to the center again, the student is informed and the coordinator staff keep the documents. During the whole process, students are informed at every stage by phone so that they do not experience unfairness, and the textbook and certificate is being sent until the student receives them.

Conclusion And Recommendations

In our country, many educational attempts have been implemented in order to adopt and spread the cooperative movement and to create a cooperative culture in the society. Cooperatives education have been carried out through educational programs structured with many examples but independent from each other, at local level and with non-sustainable organizations. These educational programs or courses are prepared according to a specific target audience or field of activity, and are short-term and accessible to a limited number of people. It is of a great importance that the educational programs are carried out continuously and being accessible to everyone from everywhere, in order for the managers and partners to participate actively in cooperatives activities and especially for the youth to recognize and adopt the cooperative movement, which are among the principles of cooperatives (ICA, 1995). This will only be possible through open and continuous education in cooperatives through distance learning. Based on this need, the Cooperative e-Certificate Program has been prepared within Anadolu University with the request and cooperation of the Ministry of Trade.

The Cooperative e-Certificate Program was designed under the coordination of Anadolu University by forming a study group consisting of officials from both institutions and by making sure of covering the relevant fields. The Cooperative e-Certificate Program has been prepared for everyone over the age of 18 who are interested in this field, cooperative partners and managers. This educational program has been designed as a result of the delicate work of experts in the field of instructional and content design in a way that will appeal to people of all ages,

professions and all educational levels. A comprehensive, easy to read with a simple narrative content and a very detailed design in terms of teaching techniques has been made. Therefore, it can be claimed as being the first lifelong learning implementation appealing to such a broad audience. Although the audience consists of different ages, and educational levels, no problems or difficulties have been experienced in terms of accessing or benefiting from the content. It can be considered as an indicator of the success of the instructional design approach and certification organization of the whole program. Lifelong learning opportunities can be increased by preparing educational programs in different fields within the structure of the Cooperative e-Certificate Program.

Students who enroll in the Cooperative e-Certificate Program prepare for the certificate exam by using the printed textbook sent to them by mail and made according to the distance education methods, and by taking advantage of online courses and e-learning materials designed according to the self-study methods throughout 12 weeks. The Cooperative e-Certificate Program exam is held three times in a year in 81 provinces under supervision. The examination organization is done by Anadolu University and is conducted either in computer labs of agreed universities all around Turkey under the supervision of someone in charge or online. Students are expected to get 50 points out of 100 points to be regarded as successful. Those with a score of 50 and above are entitled to receive a “Cooperative Certificate”. Throughout the program, students are offered e-learning courses through a portal that contains various e-learning materials. Especially when designing lifelong programs for a large audience, communication environments should be enriched with different technologies and media options in order to enable students with different learning styles and experiences to choose and use the most suitable environment (Kip Kayabaş, 2020). Thus, students will be able to benefit from the course materials for printed, visual and audio materials by choosing the environment that fits their preferences and learning habits. The variety of learning materials should be increased by conducting research on students’ material preferences. Additionally, the most preferred learning materials should be determined and new options should be offered by increasing the existing options.

On the other hand, individuals need to have sufficient digital literacy skills to be able to benefit effectively from open and distance learning implementations where information and communication technologies are used extensively. Studies show that as individuals’ competence to use computer and internet technologies increase, their anxiety levels decrease and they use these environments more actively (Akkoyunlu and Kurbanoglu, 2003, p. 9; Aşkar and Umay, 2001, p. 7; Chou, 2003, p. 743; Doyle, Stamouli and Huggard, 2005, p. 7; Gordon et al, 2003, p. 292; Seferoglu, 2005, p. 100). Digital literacy skills of students are important especially during online supervised exams. Although it does not require a high level of computer skills, it can be claimed that taking the exam in a computer environment may cause anxiety in students. Therefore, it can be stressed that the online exam may have negative impacts on the students’ exam performance compared to the traditional supervised exams. To solve this problem, sufficient information should be given to the students before the exam. By sharing the documents with the exam conditions and rules, and providing a practical sample exam, students can be helped to decrease their stress level.

Individuals can be hesitant to participate in activities within the scope of lifelong learning, especially because of the responsibilities of an adult life. When it comes to the participation of individuals in an educational program, firstly it is expected that the education will aim a need to fulfill or it will obtain concrete practical outcomes at the end. The Cooperative e-Certificate Program is a lifelong learning activity with optional participation. However, cooperative education should be disseminated to raise more awareness in the society, to spread the movement, to help cooperatives sustain their activities more effectively and efficiently. If the people who will take part in the management or partnership of the cooperatives are required to receive a certificate from the Ministry, it will extend the education throughout the society.

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INTERNET RESOURCES

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- <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2020/04/20200409-5.htm>
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